



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

## 6102.0 - Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods, 2001

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### INTRODUCTION

24.1 The ABS has been collecting information about industrial disputes since 1913. The Industrial Disputes Collection produces monthly estimates of the number of industrial disputes (where ten or more working days are lost), employees involved, and working days lost. The data are used to support analysis and monitoring of industrial disputation in Australia.

### COLLECTION OUTPUT

24.2 Estimates are published in **Industrial Disputes, Australia** (Cat. no. 6321.0). More detailed estimates are available on request.

24.3 A number of series are produced from the collection including:

- number of industrial disputes;
- number of employees involved;
- number of working days lost;
- number of working days lost per thousand employees;
- cause of dispute;
- duration of dispute; and
- method of settlement.

24.4 Estimates are cross classified by State or Territory and industry.

24.5 Estimates are compiled according to the concepts and definitions outlined in Chapter 12.

### SCOPE

24.6 The scope of the Industrial Disputes Collection is restricted to employing businesses at which an industrial dispute has occurred. For this collection, industrial disputes are defined as work stoppages of ten working days or more. Ten working days are equivalent to the amount of ordinary time worked by ten people in one day, regardless of the length of the stoppage, e.g. 3,000 workers on strike for 2 hours would be counted as 750 working days lost (assuming they work an 8 hour day).

24.7 Effects on other establishments not directly involved in the dispute, such as stand-downs

because of lack of materials, disruption of transport services, power cuts, etc. are not included in the scope of this collection.

24.8 Included are the following types of industrial disputes:

- unauthorised stopwork meetings;
- sympathetic strikes (e.g. strikes in support of a group of workers already on strike);
- political or protest strikes;
- general strikes;
- work stoppages initiated by employers (e.g. lockouts); and
- rotating or revolving strikes (i.e. strikes which occur when workers at different locations take turns to stop work).

24.9 Excluded are:

- work-to-rules;
- go-slows;
- bans (e.g. overtime bans); and
- sit-ins.

24.10 In addition, if all of the employees involved in an industrial dispute resign, that dispute is considered to be resolved. The dispute is no longer considered in scope of the collection from the date of the employment termination.

## **COLLECTION METHODOLOGY**

24.11 Detailed information about each identified dispute is obtained using a mail-out/mail-back collection methodology. Information is generally from employers and, in some cases, unions.

24.12 The collection reference period is the previous calendar month.

24.13 Telephone follow-up and some written reminders of all outstanding returns is undertaken after the due date. The response rate is 100% in most months.

## **FRAME DESIGN**

24.14 The statistical units for the collection are businesses involved in industrial disputes.

24.15 The frame is compiled monthly and comprises all organisations whose employees were known to have been involved in disputes, as defined, in the previous calendar month. All organisations on the frame are selected in the survey.

24.16 A number of sources are used to identify industrial disputes, including: Media Monitors; Reuters Business Service; union magazines; Australian and State Industrial Relations

Commission (IRC) Hearings Lists; and reports from government authorities. Organisations identified through these sources are contacted by telephone to determine whether the dispute is in scope of the collection. In addition, lists of organisations regularly involved in disputes are maintained. Organisations on these lists are contacted by mail each month to determine whether they have been involved with disputes that are in scope of the collection.

## **FRAME UNDERCOVERAGE**

24.17 It is not always possible to identify all the businesses involved in a dispute, particularly in large disputes. When this occurs, other bodies which might be able to provide the information, such as unions and employer organisations, are contacted. Some small disputes (particularly in small businesses) may also not be identified because of the lack of media attention given to them.

## **ESTIMATION**

24.18 Estimates are calculated by summing the survey responses. As the collection is a census, no weighting is required.

24.19 Generally, there is no imputation for non-response. However, for large general strikes, clerical imputation methods are used, and as many sources are referenced as possible, such as unions, employer organisations, press and employers.

## **RELIABILITY OF THE ESTIMATES**

24.20 Estimates from the survey are subject to non-sampling error.

## **DATA COMPARABILITY OVER TIME**

24.21 In order to provide a high degree of consistency and comparability over time, changes to survey methods, survey concepts, data item definitions, frequency of collection, and time series analysis methods, are made as infrequently as possible. Significant changes have included:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>1913</b> | Collection commenced. Quarterly and annual publications until 1979. Commenced as a monthly collection in 1959.   |
| <b>1950</b> | .<br>Cause of dispute and method of settlement classifications revised.<br>Ceased publishing the results of strikes and lockouts. These results had been defined as: in favour of the workpeople; in favour of the employer; compromise; and indefinite. |
| <b>1952</b> | .<br>Ceased publishing details of the number of establishments involved by State/Territory and industry.   |
| <b>1960</b> | .<br>Number of disputes, number of employees involved and number of working days lost classified for the first time according to the size (in terms of the number of employees involved or the number of working days lost) of the dispute.              |
| <b>1967</b> | .<br>Working days lost per thousand employees first published.<br>.  |

- 1968** Australian Standard Industrial Classification (ASIC) introduced; revised in 1973, 1978 and 1983.
- 1970** Cause of dispute classification revised to its current definition.
- 1979** Disputes and the number of employees involved categorised as either new (commenced during the reporting period) or continuous (continued from the previous reporting period, or the gap from the previous stoppage was less than 2 complete months).
- 1982** Estimates of loss of wages discontinued.
- 1988** From September 1988 a dispute affecting more than one industry and/or State is counted once in each affected industry and State but only once in the Australia total. Previously, disputes affecting more than one industry and State were counted as separate disputes at the industry and State level and in the Australia total.
- 1995** Labour Force Survey estimates used as the basis for the calculation of working days lost per thousand employees from 1995. Previously, estimates from the Survey of Employment and Earnings were used, sometimes augmented by Labour Force Survey estimates.  
Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) introduced.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

24.22 For further details contact the Assistant Director, Labour Employer Surveys Section, on Perth (08) 9360 5245.

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